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CUNNING CHUCK.

A Christmas Story of Plantation



N old negro, the owner of a well cultivated farm, sat with a numchildren in front of a blaz-ing fire of hickory logs. Christmas time was drawing near

dren's faces
happy fancy
had drawn pictures of bright

eagerness. The care toes in the fire to roast when a boy said: "Gran'dady, tell us erbout er Chris'mas er long time ergo, 'fo' de wah, w'en you wuz er slave."

"Huh! we had Chris'musses sho nuff in dem days, but I reckon da peered happier caze I wuz young at de time. I berlonged ter er ole man named John Peter Thomas. He wa'n't er bad pusson, but he had er mighty heep o' cuis ways erbout him. I rick'lecks one Chris'muss in de specially. Ole marster he got inter trouble wid de church. He had been er mighty man in de conger-gation-furnished all de wood fur ter keep de house wa'm, an' ole mistiss she mighty nigh allus baked de sackerment

"One day de preacher—an' I neber did like de man, he wuz so stuck up—borrid marster's hoss ter ride ter town, an' I reckon he muster got drunk ur suthin', nigh dead, he had been runned so hard. Marster didn't like it er tall, an' he gunter talk ter de preacher er bout it, an' de preacher he talk sorter short, an' den marster whupped him, whupped him awfel, too. Wall, de church tuck it up, an' marster got inter er quarrel wid de head men an' bless yo' hearts, da turned marster out. It tickled do niggers, but you better blebe da soon gunter laugh on de yuder side da mouths. Ole marster he lowed dat he wuzdone wid 'ligien-dathe wan't eben gwine ter keep Chris'muss. Dis made us look powerful blue, I tell you. We had been in de habit o' restin' an' 'joyin' ourse'fs fur er whole week. All we'd hatter do wuz ter git up er nuff wood ter last er week, an' den we'd be ez free ez birds. We'd roam ober de country an' ketch rabbits, an' hunt possoms at night au' hab dances wid de gals, an' jes' hab er high time all roun'. But all dis wuz gwine be stopped. De ole man wuz gwine make us work all through de Chris'-

"Dar wuz er sort o' Guinea nigger libed in the cabin next ter mine. He



THE CHRISTMAS STORY TELLER.

mighty funny pusson, an' da called him Chuck. Well, atter we foun' out de thing had dun been settled an' dat we wan't gwine ter git no Chris'muss, I went inter Chuck's cabin one night ter greave wid him as I had dun greaved wid all de yuders. Chuck he wuz er settin' by de fire makin' ar cross

Y'Whut you gwine do wid dat?' says I.
"'Shoot rabbits wid itdurin' de Chris'nuss.' says he. savs he.

"'W'y, doan you know dat ole marster ain't gwine gin us no Chris'muss?'

"'No, I doan know dat." "'Wall, it's time you wuz er findin'

"'Oh, no 'tain't. Ole mars thinks he ain't gwine gin us no Chris'muss, but he

"'How you know?"

"'Neber mine-suthin' dun been er whisperin' ter me.'

"'Yas, an' will whisper er long time 'fo' you shoot no rabbits wid dat ar cross bow durin' dis here comin' Chris'muss.'

"'All right, ef you thinks so, hab it yo' own way, but I tell you dat dis is goin' ter be one de mos' 'joyable Chris'-musses you eber seed.'

"'I doan know how it gwine come,' says I.

"'Oh, mebby not, but you ain'ter very

smart pusson, no how.' "I thought de Guinea nigger had dun los' his mine, an' I got up an' went ter my cabin an' lay down, mighty sorrer-

"De next day marster tole me dat he want me ter go up ter town wid him ter stan' berhino his cheer an' wait on him at de hotel table, er habit dat de white folks hab in dem days, an' I thought dat atter we got out on de road I would hab er chance ter talk him outen dat 'cision dat he dun cum ter in de regards ter Chris'muss. But somehow I didn't hab de nerve ter mention it ter him ez we was gwine, an' den I 'lowed ter merse'f

dat I wait till we come back. "It waz putty late in de night ez we rode toward home. Dar had been er little skift o'snow, an'de yeth looked like er sheet dun been spread out on it. Every thing wuz so ghost-like dat I didn't see how he could git mad at me fur talkin' ter him, so I says, says I: 'Marster, Christ'muss will soon be yere,

"'Hush yo' mouf,' says he; "dar ain't no sicher thing ez Chris'muss. Dar uster be, but dar ain't now.'

" I thought it wuz gwine keep on jes aige to allus did, says I.

thought, an' mo'n dat, ef you say ernuther word on dat subjeck I'll make you git offen dis hoss (I wuz ridin' be-hin' him) an' walk home.'

"You better blebe I hushed up. It waz monstuss skeery right or long dar, an' I woulder tuck er duck fit of ho hader made me git down.

"Wall, we turned off inter a skirt o' woods, an' rid er long whar de trees hung low ober de road. Putty soon I think my blood gwine ter freeze. Er voice frum it seemed like way up yander call out;

" John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas.' "'Whoa,' says ole mars. 'Who dat

" John Peter Thomas, John Peter

Thomas.'
"Mussyful Lawd, who dat callin' me?"
"Mussyful Lawd, who dat callin' me?" sklamed de old man, an' he socked de spurs in de hoss, an' erway he went down de road. Dar wuz er big bend in de road, an' marster kep' ridin' wid his head tucked down, an' not sayin' a word till we got roun' dat bend, an' den, jestez he gunter talk ter me in or skeered sort o' way, yere come de voice ergin. Dis time it say: 'John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas, you kain't run erway frum me. Stop.

"You better blebe he stopped right

dar in de road, er shakin' all ober.
"John Peter Thomas, John Peter Thomas, wharfo you gwine treat dem po' culled folks so? I'se got my cye on you, John Peter Thomas, an' you better



"I'SE GOT MY EVE ON YOU."

look out. Doan furgit 'em on de day o' de Chris'muss, John Peter Thomas."

"Den de voice hushed an' ole marster groaned. Atter while we rid on, an bimeby the ole pusson said: 'Jake, doan you say or word o' whut has took place ter night. I wuz jest er foolin' bout you folks not habin' no Chris'muss.

"I wan't gwine say nuthin' fur I wuz "I wan't gwine say nuthin' fur I wuz mighty nigh skeercel outen my raw hide shees, I tell you; an' w'en I got ter my cabin' I wuz so 'cited dat I bumped bof sides o' de do' ez. I went in. De next day marster call us all up an' say: 'I'se mighty sorry dat you thought I wan't gwine gin you no hollerday. W'y de Lawd know I lub you, an' 'stead o' habin' er week, w'y bless yo' souls, you may hab two.' He looked at 'ne w'en he say dis, but he neeter, fur I wan't gwine say dis, but he neeter, fur I wan't gwine ter say er word, de Lawd know'd, fur I wan't done bein' skeered at dat minit.

"Dar wuz er mighty heep o' happiness in de quarter dat night, an' while I wuz settin' by de fire, mos' ready ter go ter bed, who should come in but old Chuck. "'Whut I tell you?' says he.

"'You tole me de truf an' nuthin' shorter, but I clar I thought you dun los' yo' mine. Say, ef you swar you neber mention it I will tell you suthin'. Will you swar? "'Yas,' say he, 'I will swar.'

Den I tole him what had happened, an' den he say: "Ef you swar not ter say nuthin' I'll tell you suthin'.' I swore, an' den he laughed like he gwine take er fit an' atter he got able which peered ter be er monstus long time, he wuz so tickled, he say, he did: 'Man up er bendin' tree, er haw, haw. White man an' er nigger come ridin' er long. Man up de tree called de name o' de white man. White man gits skeered an gallops his boss. Man drapped down outen de tree-cuts through de woods, gits inter er nuder tree ahead o' de white man, an' gins him some-haw, er hawsome advice. White man, de next day, call up de niggers-ter he, he-you know de rest.'

"Wall, chillun," the old man continued, "I sot dar er lookin' at Chuck, an' er thinkin' dat he wuz sartinly de smartest pusson I ober seed in my life, an' I sometimes wonders what he would er been ef he had er liben. Po' ole man, One Chris'muss we laid him down under de big red oak tree. Take yere, lemme git deze swect taters outen de fire." OPIE P. READ.

#### CHRISTMAS NOVELTIES.

A toy-dealer guarantees to deliver presents at the house without the small boy seeing them.

It is said that a stocking has been invented that will hold a drum and a bob-

A climbable Christmas-tree will be considered one of the most useful inventions by fathers who have a houseful of small

One of the most ingenious novelties of the year is a contrivance to keep the youngsters' eyes closed when Santa Claus is making his visit.

A lover's thermometer fells a long-felt want. A young man has only to test the warmth of his girl's affection to learn whether she expects a watch and chain or only a box of bon-bons.

Optical illusion has at last been adapted to a practical purpose. Frenchman has invented a device which makes a pretty girl fail to see that she is standing under the mistletoe until it is too late.

Santa Claus says that the modern chimneys are a nuisance, as they land him away down in the cellar in a redhot furnace, and then half the time the cellar door is locked .- Dansville

A new skate will be put on the market this year. The inventor claims it can be put on in half the time that other styles take. Those who have watched a young man put on his best girl's skates will not feel disposed to dispute this

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THE ROANOKE HOSPITAL.

A meeting of the subscribers to the hospital fund, and of all citizens of Roanoke feeling an interest in the enterprise, will be held at the Opera House at 4 p. m. on Friday, December

The ladies are cordially invited and a large attendance of our people is earnestly requested. It is desired that a board of trustees

shall be elected and definite action taken towards organization and con-

Committee on subscription,
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Until further notice regular trips will. be made from Roanoke (corner Shenan-doah avenue and Commerce street) to Salem (corner Fourth street and Roa-noke Boulevard) by the following sched-

LEAVE ROANOKE. | LEAVE SALEM. 7 a. m. | 2 p. m. | 8 a. m. | 3:00 p. m. 9 a. m. | 4 p. m. | 10 a. m. | 5:00 p. m. 11 a. m. | 6 p. m. | 12 a. m. | 6:45 p. m.

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